Functioning of Fair Price shops in the Country

3576. SHRI RAMDAS AGARWAL : Will the Minister of FOOD AND CIVIL SUPPLIES be pleased to state :

(a) whether Government are aware of the mismanagement irregular supply and corruption prevalent in the Fair Price Shops in the country;

(b) whether any concrete action plan in this regard has been chalked out at the recently held Convention of Consumers and Fair Price Owners in New Delhi; and

(c) whether the Minister also held meeting with State Governments, if so, what steps have been taken for making the Public Distribution System more efficient, strong and faultless ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FOOD AND CIVIL SUPPLIES (SHRI RAM PUJAN PATEL) : (a) The fair price shops are set up and managed by the State Governments/UT Administrations, and complaints in their functioning are also attended to by them. In an operation of such a large magnitude with about 3.6 lakhs shops in the country, some shortcomings do exist continual efforts are made to strengthen and streamline the PDS which nevertheless continues to play useful role in providing basic essential commodities to the consumers at reasonable prices.

(b) While such a convention was held, Government is not aware of a concrete action plan chalked out thereat.

(c) The 11th meeting of the Advisory Council of PDS, which *inter-alia* has as its members Ministers/Administrators of State Governments/UTs, was held recently. Some important points which emerged during the deliberations relate to the need for (i) strict enforcement of provisions of Essential Commodities Act/Orders thereunder by State Governments/UT Administrations; (ii) Vigilance Committees at fair price shop level/Panchayat level to monitor the functioning of fair price shop. (iii) Supply of additional items by State Governments/UT Administrations by using PDS outlets and for considering doorstep delivery of PDS items to fair price shops to avoid malpractices.

Pay Scales to Homoeopathic Doctors

3577. SHRI ASHWANI KUMAR : Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that an Order No. 77/H/15/4 was issued on 21st March, 1977 by Government to all the General Managers of Indian Railways regarding pay scales to homoeopathic doctors;

(b) if so, what are the details thereof; and

(c) what are the reasons for not giving pay scales to the Homoeopathic Doctors, working in Railways ?

THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES) : (a) Letter No. 77/H/15/4 dated 21-3-77 was a circular.

(b) Through this letter the Ministry of Railways had called for proposals from all the Zonal Railways for considering introduction of the indigenous systems of medicines on the Indian Railways on an experimental basis. The proposals were to be fully vetted by the FA&CAOs with full financial implications and justification for the introduction of any of the approved systems viz. Homoepathic Ayurveda, Unani & Siddha systems. The intention of this Ministry was that the indigenous system of medicine should work as complementary to the modern system of medicine.

(c) The Homoeopathic Dispensaries were initially introduced on the Indian Railways, as a measure of staff welfare, under the aegis of the Staff Benefit Fund, by paying a fixed Honorarium to the Homoeopathic Doctors. Proposal to take over these dispensaries under the control of the Railway administration have been considered from time to time at various levels but this was not considered feasible. It was, however, decided that these dispensaries should function under the aegis of Staff Benefit Fund. The Honorarium payable to the Homoeopathic Doctors engaged on the Railways have been revised upwardly last year in July.